

CLAIMS

What is Claimed is:

1. A computer system, comprising:
 - an operating system;
 - 5 at least one shareable file that is accessible to a plurality of users, wherein each shareable file is stored in a file storage memory location and is associated with a file path;
 - a shareable file tree comprising the file path of each shareable file;
 - a user file tree associated with a user and the shareable file tree, wherein the
 - 10 user file tree comprises at least one link, wherein each link is associated with the file path of a referenced file, such that the user file tree is operable to point to the referenced file in response to a request to access a file; and
 - a private file area associated with one of the plurality of users, wherein the private file area is operable to store a file that is not publicly available to other users of
 - 15 the computer system.
2. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the user file tree is initially populated with links corresponding to the file path of a selected number of shareable files, such that the user file tree is operable to point to a selected shareable file in
- 20 response to a request to access the selected shareable file to perform an operation that does not involve a modification of the shareable file.
3. The computer system of Claim 2, wherein the user file tree is initially populated with one or more links corresponding to the file path of each shareable file.

4. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the operating system is operable to copy a selected shareable file to a private file area associated with one of the plurality of users and modify the user file tree associated with the user such that the link associated with the selected shareable file points to the copy of the selected shareable file instead of the selected shareable file in response to an attempt to access the selected shareable file to perform an operation that involves a modification of the shareable file.

5. The computer system of Claim 4, wherein the modification of the user file tree is transparent to the user.

6. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the private file area is associated with a selected set of the plurality of users.

7. The computer system of Claim 6, wherein the selected set of the plurality of users is associated with the operating system.

8. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the private file area is operable to store a file that does not comprise a link to either the user file tree or the shareable file tree.

9. The computer system of Claim 1, wherein the user file tree further comprises metadata.

10. The computer system of Claim 9, wherein a link located in the user file tree further comprises the metadata.

11. The computer system of Claim 10, wherein the metadata comprises data associated with the user file tree.

12. The computer system of Claim 11, wherein the metadata is operable to allow the user to define a permitted access to a selected shareable file without copying the selected shareable file into the private file area.

5 13. A method for providing access to one or more shareable files in a computer network to a plurality of users, comprising the steps of:

creating a shareable file tree comprising a file path of each shareable file;

creating a user file tree for each user;

10 populating the user file tree with one or more links, wherein each link is associated with a shareable file in the shareable file tree, such that each link is operable to point to the shareable file in response to a user request to access the shareable file; and

15 creating a private file area associated with a user, wherein the private file area is operable to store a file that is not publicly available to other users of the computer system.

14. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a user request to access a selected shareable file to perform an operation that does not involve a modification of the shareable file; and

20 pointing to the selected shareable file in response to the user request.

15. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a user request to access a selected shareable file to perform an operation that involves a modification of the shareable file;

25 copying the selected shareable file into the private file area associated with the user;

modifying the user file tree associated with the user such that the link associated with the selected shareable file point to the copy of the selected shareable file located in the private file area associated with the user.

16. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the steps of:
receiving a user request to delete a selected shareable file; and
deleting the link located in the user file tree that is associated with the
selected shareable file in response to the user request to delete the selected shareable
5 file.

17. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the steps of:
receiving a user request to delete a selected private file stored in the
private file area, wherein the selected private file is not associated with a link; and
10 deleting the selected private file in response to the user request to delete the
selected private file.

18. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the steps of:
receiving a user request to delete a selected private file stored in the
15 private file area, wherein the selected private file is associated with a link in the user file
tree;
deleting the selected private file in response to the user request to delete
the selected private file; and
deleting the link associated with the selected private file in response to the
20 user request to delete the selected private file.

19. The method of Claim 13, wherein the step of creating a private file area
further comprises the step of creating a private file area associated with a selected set
of the plurality of users.

20. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the step of creating a
metadata associated with a selected one of the links associated with a shareable file in
the shareable file tree.